



A V O I C E F R O M T H E W I L D E R N E S S

# The Importance of Our Words

In Matthew 12:37 Jesus says to us, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

How is it that our words can have so much importance that Jesus says we will be "justified" or "condemned" by them? It is because He knows as verse 34 says that, "**out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.**" Our words and the spirit in which we speak them are, an index of whether we are living by the flesh - letting self rule, or walking by the spirit - allowing self to be subdued - crucified with Christ. If we have made a conscious decision to consecrate or surrender ourselves to God at the beginning of the day, we will be aware of the promptings of the Holy Spirit - through our conscience - when the temptation to speak words of irritation, foolishness or exaggeration, assail us. And for me, the temptations come more than once a day.

Recently, my daughter Allison and I were putting up some rope trim around a ceiling beam. As we came to the end of the beam in the corner between the wall and the ceiling, the temptation came! It was a very tight spot, up on a ladder, and hammering in the corner. The first nail bent so I told Allison, I would put in another nail so I could pull the first one out without pulling the rope out of

position. The second nail bent, and the third, and yes, so did the fourth one! Now what do you suppose I wanted to say to Allison, or out loud to myself, in her hearing? Remember, its hot up there, a cramped position on the ladder, and I have already hit the new paint on the wall with the hammer. The temptation was to accept the irritation and frustration as mine, to give into the intense pulls of the flesh and speak the words that would justify myself and prove that grace was not sufficient to keep me. But the Holy Spirit was also prompting me with a way of escape. I Cor. 10:13 says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but **will with the temptation also make a way of escape**, that ye may be able to bear it." He reminded me that this was another opportunity to be kept by the power of the Gospel - the power that we accept by faith in these kinds of situations - and not allow the strong arguments of self to prevail. By grace I chose to accept the "way of escape" and by faith deny the clamorings of the flesh, to stay connected to Christ who is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Romans 1:18. Now instead of spilling forth words which would have denied Christ, wounded the Spirit of my daughter, and only made me miserable in self, God allowed it to open a conversation

with Allison about the power of the Gospel in the little trials and tests of every day. We talked of how these temptations give us the practical training that prepares us to finally hold on to Christ through the last great conflict soon to come upon this earth. What a blessed contrast to the words and conversation that would have been if, I had given way to the strong pulls of self. The words of frustration, self-justification, would not have brought relief; no, only remorse, conviction of sin and finally by God's grace repentance to God and my daughter. It paints quite a clear picture of the importance of our words, doesn't it friends? It also helps us see why Jesus says, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words, thou shalt be condemned." Before our words are spoken, we have consciously or unconsciously - through habit - made a decision that either demonstrates the keeping power of the gospel and our connection with Christ or another manifestation of being ruled by the flesh - our carnal nature.

But friends, this simple illustration, though it represents what each of us faces daily, is only one aspect of the importance of our words and whether they show our connection to the flesh or the power of the Gospel. For many of us professing Christians, we may "**seem to be religious**" dressing right, eating right, even well versed in defending every point of truth, but have we learned to bridle our tongues in every aspect of daily life? James 1:26 says, "If any man among you **seem to be religious**, and bridleth not his tongue ... this man's religion is vain." Friends, this simply means having the words we speak and the tone in which we speak them checked or screened, as to whether they represent a true connection to a power above and outside of ourselves?

Recently I was talking with a friend on the telephone. We were having a pleasant conversation, so pleasant that I relaxed my vigilance. Have you ever found yourself in that position? He was telling me of a simple change and addition he had made to his diet which was aiding him in sleeping better. I don't have any problem with sleep, so as he was telling me the benefits I had this thought go through my mind, "it would probably put me in a coma if

it was helping him sleep that well." The Spirit gently prompted me not to speak those words from my thoughts, but unfortunately I chose this time to go past that impression. You see friends, **it is not just words of irritation that deny our connection to Christ**, it can be foolish, careless, exaggerated words and expressions. MCP Volume 2 pg 577 says, "weed out every careless word. Remember that by your words you shall be justified, and by your words condemned. The tongue needs bridling."

The Lord prompted me to bridle my tongue, tried to impress me not to say it, but self-justification reasoned it away, it's just a little thing. The real issue is not that I said "it would probably put me in a coma", but that I chose not to put aside my will to do the will of my Father. That does not excuse the fact that I exaggerated - which many people fail to recognize as a sin - but the focus must be why have I exaggerated and what power can keep me from it and am I willing to recognize it as sin, and not justify my exaggeration? YI 214 says that "**exaggeration is a terrible sin.**" You mean

for me to say "that it would probably put me in a coma" was a "terrible sin"? Yes! First because God's word says it is and secondly because I still can't be fully trusted to speak what God is asking me to say or be silent when He's asking me to. Friends I'm not overwhelmed by this, but I am becoming more and more aware of my constant need of grace and my true condition, if I choose to have my own way, even in a comfortable conversation with a friend. Are we willing to let God have all of us, every aspect of our lives? Are we willing to allow Him to transform us in this area of the Christian experience? Instead of finding ourselves so quick to justify my way of seeing it, or excusing our words because "everybody does it". We should be encouraged to do as Paul exhorts us, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ." Philippians 1:27. This should be our reasoning and the real justification for the words we choose to speak. And if our words don't meet this gospel criteria, should we really want to say them anyway?

One Sabbath a few months ago, I had what I hoped

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was going to be the privilege of hearing a very well known pastor speak on a subject of curious interest. Before he stood to speak he offered a beautiful prayer asking for the Holy Spirit's power to give him words to speak to reach the hearts of the people. How heart sick I was as he stepped to the podium and seeing a second microphone stand - not in use - taking hold of it he said, "I wonder what this is for?" Then bending it toward him he said, "Must be an overflow for extra rain water." There was a burst of laughter and a conscious awareness, at least to me that the Spirit of the prayer had changed. My heart was grieved and I had pity for the man. Here was an opportunity for the gospel to be brought forth, but friends the reverent tone never returned to that service. Ev. 643 says, "The flippant words that fall from his lips, the trifling anecdotes, the words spoken to create a laugh, are all condemned by the word of God and are entirely out of place in the sacred desk." See also Eph. 5:4. Do I feel critical of the man? No, I prayed and have prayed for him as I remember how often foolish words and stories and comments just for a laugh used to come from my lips. Friends, how often do you make comments, catchy remarks, just for a laugh, usually at someone else's expense? Rev. 14:4,5 says, "These are they that follow the lamb withersoever he goeth ... And **in their mouth was found no guile.**" I want to be one of these people, don't you? Are we making choices - conscious choices - all through the day to, "follow the lamb withersoever He goeth?" If so, we will be found with "no guile" in our mouths! That word "guile" means to "trick" or "bait". That is to say something that isn't true or to say something that leads someone else to an untrue conclusion. Like the fish who goes after the "bait" only to find the hook! Are we willing to have our mouths bridled long enough to check our words? Do they testify to the gospel we profess, are they exaggerations, or "guile" in our mouths? We are told that "**our words index the state of our hearts.**" YI 212. What would our spouse, our children, our friends and associates say about the "index" of our heart, if evaluated only by our words?

How many times have we found ourselves in a situa-

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tion where we may be with one or more people and someone else makes silly, foolish remarks, something we might not speak, but do we allow ourselves to enter into the lightness or laughter to avoid the awkwardness of appearing odd or extreme? When someone else, not present in the conversation is discussed, do we find it easier to follow the others in the gossip, and find ourselves speaking things that we would not be speaking if the one being discussed were present? Or do we instead of entering into the gossip or faultfinding, demonstrate the power of the gospel in an appropriate silence, or by speaking a "word in due season"? Our words can change the course of the conversation or place the person being discussed in a better light, as we would appreciate if we were the one absent and being discussed. Friends, **it requires just as much grace to refrain from involving ourselves in laughing along with foolishness, to choose to speak positively when others are gossiping, as it does to refrain from the temptation to speak in a harsh and irritated manner to my spouse under pressure.** Just because it is more socially

acceptable to laugh at foolishness and involve ourselves in gossip, does not mean there is any less of self that needs to die or that it is any less a denial of our connection with a living Savior. We are told that we, "Deny Christ by evil speaking, by foolish talking, by words that are untruthful or unkind." DA 357. Does this mean we go around with a sober, straight face, a life quenched of joy? Consider these words of balance from SC 120-121. "Levity will be repressed; there will be no boisterous merriment, no rude jesting; but the religion of Jesus gives peace like a river. It does not quench the light of joy; it does not restrain cheerfulness, nor cloud the sunny, smiling face." I think these words are clear and encouraging, and if we are honest with ourselves we already know the differences being discussed.

There are so many areas that could be addressed in the "Importance of Our Words", but in closing I would like us to consider if our words can be trusted? We might have a tendency to quickly say, "Yes my words can be trusted". But a simple illustration may cause us to re-look

at the question. A man and his son stopped by our home one day to discuss some things with us. During the course of our conversation, the man's son was running his hand along the wall, and the Father asked him to stop running his hand along the wall, which I appreciated. The boy stopped momentarily, then began again. Now the father repeated his request for the boy to stop and soon the son was right back running his hand along the wall. This kind of exchange between Father and son took place several times with no change in behavior. I don't think the father was consciously aware of the importance of his words. But how important were they to his son? Was he learning to trust his Father's words? Certainly not in a positive way. He was testing his Father to see if he meant what he was saying. But in this case there was no restraint or correction and so the boy concluded his Father's words were not important. Friends, most of us have seen the sad results of unsanctified, supposed love and forbearance. A longsuffering that allows children to be disobedient and disrespectful. And unfortunately most of us have reaped the results in children who fuss, complain, bicker, negotiate with parents, and are generally miserable when self is crossed or even tested a little. Could Eli's sons trust his words? No! He was often reproofing - like the Father in this illustration who said, "Stop running your hand along the wall." But he failed to faithfully and consistently restrain, correct or give consequences to them. Finally God had to take the discipline of Eli and his sons into His own hands.

Friends, the sad reality for our children is that **as they learn to distrust what we say**, they will consciously or unconsciously, be **learning to distrust the words of God**. When mother or father say, "no" or "thou shalt not" and the child tests to see if they can trust the words of their parents, if there is no consequence, restraint or correction; then the child will naturally, carnally transfer the same distrust and disregard for where the Lord says, "Thou shalt not". And what about our words and conversation with others of the world or the church, who hear us make so high a profession of the saving power of the gospel, will they also be led to disregard God's word, because our influence has shown them, no difference between He that believeth and he that believeth not?

Can our words be trusted? When we commit to taking

time for communication with our spouse, recreation time with the family, when others are counting on us to be on time, can our words be trusted?

We have only considered a few areas involving the importance of our words, but it is becoming more clear to me why Jesus could say, "**By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned**"? As we recognize that, "our words index the state of our heart", may we be led to cooperate with Christ - "The power of the gospel" to have the "springs purified" that the "fountain may be pure". It will do us no saving good to concentrate on our words apart from concentrating on making and maintaining a vital connection with the "One Mighty to save". Yes, mighty to save us even from the power of an unsanctified tongue.

My prayer for each of us is that we will so fully cooperate with divine grace that it can be seen and said of us, "Your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ". Philippians 1:27.

## A Voice From The Wilderness

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